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Supplementary webappendix

This webappendix formed part of the original submission and has been peer reviewed.
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Supplement to: Bjertness E, Nijem K, Hussein A, Giacaman R, Holmboe-Ottesen G, Kristensen P. 15 years of cooperation in research and higher education between the Faculty of Medicine, University of Oslo, and Palestinian institutions. Published online July 2, 2010

15 years of cooperation in research and higher education between the Faculty of Medicine, University of Oslo, and Palestinian institutions

After the Oslo Peace Agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization in 1993, the Norwegian Government decided to finance projects in research and higher education between Norwegian and Palestinian institutions. In 1994, the former Rector of the University of Oslo, Prof Lucy Smith, headed a delegation to all eight Palestinian universities, two in the Gaza Strip and six in the West Bank. The local organiser was Prof Gabi Baramki, Palestinian Council for Higher Education. Dr Ebba Wergeland and Prof Espen Bjertness represented the Faculty of Medicine of University of Oslo. Representatives from the Palestinian universities presented research ideas to be considered for cooperation with University of Oslo. Hebron University presented an occupational health project among shoe factory workers, and the Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH) at Birzeit University presented a nutritional project. Nutritional transition from traditional food based primarily on vegetables and fruits to a more westernised and processed food, combined with decreasing population physical activity, and subsequent increased risk of non-communicable diseases prompted the project. Occupational health and hygiene research has traditionally been under-recognised, even in developed countries. Awareness of health effects due to poor working conditions should be highlighted in a nation of state building. Knowledge, based on research about those health effects, is emphasised as an important component of national health plans, which aim at protecting workers. High unemployment rates, uncertainty about the future, and absence of control due to Israeli occupation contributed to a low focus on the adverse occupational health effects for both workers and employers. The project ideas resulted in a continuous cooperation from 1995 to 2009, between the Department of General Practice and Community Medicine, University of Oslo, Birzeit University, and Hebron University. For short periods, the cooperation included the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme and the Palestinian Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip.

During the early 1995 project planning phase, which involved Rita Giacaman, Awni Khatib, Gerd Holmboe-Ottesen, Petter Kristensen, and Espen Bjertness, training of local faculty and researchers at the PhD level was considered important. The first project between Hebron University and University of Oslo supported the training of two PhD candidates from Birzeit University and one from Hebron University. Early in the project cooperation, creation of a centre for Occupational Epidemiology at Hebron University and a centre for Epidemiology at Birzeit University became clear important goals. The research focus mainly dealt with central Public Health and occupational health challenges in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), and the training emphasised a fundamental component of public health research, notably epidemiological research methods. Furthermore, the cooperation contributed to the establishment of a Master Programme in Public Health at ICPH which we aim to develop into a Ph.D programme. Finally, the 15 years of cooperation contributed to publication of *The Lancet* Series in 2009, health in the oPt.

Collaboration

The success of the cooperation between the University of Oslo and Palestinian institutions was helped by a broad engagement from both international and local partners.

The support from Prof Per Nafstad (University of Oslo and Norwegian Institute of Public Health) about teaching research courses and co-supervision of PhD and Master candidates was important in early and critical stages of the cooperation. Furthermore, teaching support from Prof Steinar Tretli (Cancer Registry of Norway), Professor Odd Aalen (Department of Biostatistics, University of Oslo) in early stages, and in later stages both co-supervision and teaching support from Hein Stigum (Norwegian Institute of Public Health and University of Oslo) and supervision from Magne Thoresen (Department of Biostatistics, University of Oslo) is greatly acknowledged. The Institute of Occupational Health, Norway, has contributed with supervision during the entire period, and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health has recently collaborated with researcher Markku Sallmen. The long-term support from Prof John Macdonald, University of Western Cape, Australia, Prof Max and Anita Pepper, St Louis University, USA, and Prof Graham Watt, University of Glasgow, UK, in development of curricula and in teaching, contributed to establishment of the Master Programme in Public Health at ICPH and the recent publication of *The Lancet* Series. Their contribution is greatly acknowledged.

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 - NUFU PRO 65/96: Coordinators 1996-2001: Espen Bjertness, Awni Khatib.
Involved institutions: University of Oslo, Hebron University, Birzeit University and Gaza Community Mental Health Programme: NOK 2.526.000.-

- NUFU PRO 63/96: Coordinators 1996-2001: Gerd Holmboe-Ottesen, Rita Giacaman. Involved institutions: University of Oslo and Birzeit University: NOK 2.150.000.-
- NUFU PRO X1 50/2002: Coordinators 2002-07: Espen Bjertness, Khaldoun Nijem. Involved institutions: University of Oslo, Hebron University, Birzeit University and Gaza Ministry of Health: NOK 3.500.000.-
- NUFUSM-2008/10232: Coordinators 2008-09: Espen Bjertness, Khaldoun Nijem. Involved institutions: University of Oslo, Hebron University and Birzeit University: NOK 1.283.000.-

Total funding from NUFU: NOK 9.459.000.- (USD 1.563.000, per March 2010)

2. Quota scheme, University of Oslo

- Two-year scholarships to 7 Palestinian MPhil-students in international community health (14 man years, each NOK 80.000.-)
- Four-year scholarships to 9 Palestinian PhD-students (36 man years, each NOK 80.000.-)

Total funding from Quota scheme: 50 man years, NOK 4.000.000.- (USD 661.000, per March 2010)

PhD theses

1. Husseini AS. Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus and Selected Associated Factors in an Adult Palestinian Population. An Epidemiological Study of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus and Impaired Glucose Tolerance (IGT) in Kobar and Ramallah, Palestine. PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2002.
Main supervisor: Espen Bjertness; co-supervisors: Jak Jervell, Rita Giacaman.
2. Abdul-Rahim HF. The Metabolic Syndrome in a Rural and an Urban Palestinian Population: An epidemiological study of selected components of the metabolic syndrome, including diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, and obesity in the adult population of a rural and an urban Palestinian community. PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2002.
Main supervisor: Espen Bjertness; co-supervisors: Jak Jervell, Rita Giacaman.
3. Nijem KI. Self-reported health effects and exposure to organic solvents and plastic compounds in shoe factories and workshops in Hebron City. A cross-sectional occupational health study of the workers health and working environment. PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2002.
Main supervisor: Espen Bjertness; co-supervisors: Petter Kristensen, Awni Khatib.
4. Afana AH. Studies of mental disorders in primary health care in the Gaza Strip - Prevalence, Detection, and attitude of Staff. PhD thesis, University of Oslo, 2003.
Main supervisor: Odd Steffen Dalgard; co-supervisors: Espen Bjertness, Berthold Grünfeldt.
5. Abudeyya A. Adolescent nutrition and associated sociodemographic factors in Gaza Strip, Palestine. A cross-sectional epidemiological study from Gaza City and Jabalia village and refugee camp. PhD thesis (submitted), University of Oslo, 2009.
Main supervisor: Gerd Holmboe-Ottesen; co-supervisor: Yehia Abed
6. Mikki N. Lifestyle and nutrition pattern of Palestinian adolescents. PhD thesis (in progress), University of Oslo, 2009.
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Main supervisor: Espen Bjertness; co-supervisors: Rita Bast-Pettersen, Khaldoun Nijem, Hein Stigum, Lars Lien.

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8. Salwa Massad. Prevalence of Anemia and associated factors in a Rural Palestinian Population. MPhil Thesis, Birzeit University, 2001.
9. Maysa Nemer. Lung function, respiratory symptoms, skin problems and chemical exposures – A cross-sectional occupational health study among female hairdressers in Hebron City, Palestine”. MPhil Thesis, University of Oslo, 2009.
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Selected publications

Articles: [Medline\(1–36\)](#); [other \(37–40\)](#); [accepted \(41–46\)](#)

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